this Committee were, further, examined by a Group of senior officers, headed by Cabinet Secretary. While orders on most of their recommendations, relating to pay and allowances, have been issued by the Government, there are two issues, *i.e.* pay scales of the Personnel Below Officers' Rank and of Lt. General/equivalent, which are being looked into by a Group of Ministers in view of their wider implications. Based upon the recommendations of the Group of Ministers, the Government has implemented 14 pay scales on 3rd October, 2000, removing certain anomalies in the pay scales of Personnel Below Officer Rank of Navy and Air Force, arising out of trade rationalisation in the Army. Similarly, one more pay scale has been implemented on 10th November, 2000 for those Sergeants of 'X' Group of Air Force, who qualify a technical examination at par with diploma in engineering to be designed and conducted by the Air Headquarters.

The issue relating to the remaining 19 pay scales of Personnel Below Officer Rank recommended by HLC including pay scales of Subedar Major and Havildar is still under consideration of the Group of Ministers.

Fire in ordnance depots

4170. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) the Ordnance depots situated in different parts of the country;

(b) the number of the fire accidents that took place in ammunition and explosion depots in the country during the last five year's year-wise and depot-wise; and

(c) the reasons for such accidents and steps taken to curb recurring such accidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI KRISHNAMRAJU) : (a) to (c) : The details of major Ordnance depots situated in various parts of the country are as under :—

(i)	Central Ordnance Depots	7
(ii)	Central Ammunition Depot	1
(iii)	Central Armoured Fighting Vehicle Depot	1
(iv)	Central Vehicle Depot	1
(V)	Regional Ordnance Depots	13
(vi)	Regional Ammunition Depots	14
(vii)	Vehicle Depots/Company	3

The details of fire incidents occurred in the Ordnance establishments during the last five years are given in the table as under :—

Sl. No.	Name of Unit	Date of Occurrence
1	Ammunition Depot, Dappar (AD)	9 October, 1997
2	Ammunition Depot, Bharatpur	28 April, 2000
3	Ammunition Depot, Dehu Road	3 May, 2000
4	Central Ordnance Depot, Kanpur	28 May, 2000
5	2 Ammunition Sub Depot (18 FAD), Mamoon (Pathankot)	29 April, 2001
6	2 Ammunition Sub Depot (24 FAD), Birdhwal (Ganganagar)	24 May, 2001
7	Ordnance Depot, Shakurbasti, New Delhi	3 June, 2001
8	Central Ordnance Depot, Jabalpur	6 August, 2001

Court of Inquiries were conducted into the fire incidents in all cases. The Courts of Inquiries have given the following findings regarding the cause of fire :—

(1) **Ammunition Depot Dappar (9 October, 1997) :** The most probable cause of fire was the likelihood of a determined intruder to have carried out the initiation of fire.

(2) **Ammunition Depot, Bharatpur (28 April, 2000) :** The likely cause was due to short circuit/sparking on pole No.4 near Guard post No. 1 1. However, this has not emerged with certainty due to lack of specific evidence.

(3) **Ammunition Depot, Dehu Road (3 May, 2000) :** This was an incident of grass fire caused by high temperatures and spread by strong winds.

(4) **Central Ordnance Depot, Kanpur (28 May, 2000) :** The cause of the fire can not be specified as the Court of Inquiry did not identify the exact cause. The possibility of sabotage/arson has, however, not been ruled out.

(5) **2 Ammunition Sub Depot (18 Field Ammunition Depot), Mamoon (Pathankot), (29 April, 2001) :** In the absence of sufficient proof, the Court of Inquiry has not been able to conclusively establish the cause of fire. The probable cause could be due to careless lighting of cigarette or match sticks.

(6) **Ordnance Depot, Shakurbasti, New Delhi (6 June, 2001) :** The cause of fire will only be ascertained after completion of Court of Inquiry, which is under progress.

(7) **2 Ammunition Sub Depot (24 Field Ammunition Depot) Birdhwal, Ganganagar (24 May, 2001) :** The cause of fire will only be ascertained after completion of Court of Inquiry, which is under progress.

(8) **Central Ordnance Depot, Jabalpur (6 August, 2001) :** The cause of fire will only be ascertained after completion of Court of Inquiry, which is under progress.

The following steps have been taken to prevent such incidents in the Ordnance Depots :—

(i) All depots have been directed to update safety and security instructions.

(ii) All depots have been inspected by a Board of Officers to check adequacy of safety and security arrangements. ;

(iii) Shortages in fire fighting equipment are being made up and defective equipment repaired.

(iv) Unserviceable ammunition is being disposed off on priority.

(v) Allotment of additional funds for creation of more storage accommodation, for shifting ammunition presently stored on open plinths under canvas to Explosive Stores Houses.

Foreign Assistance in modernisation of ordnance depots

4171. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 2011 given in Rajya Sabha on 9th August, 2001 and state :

(a) whether Government have sought/propose to seek assistance from foreign countries in modernising the ordnance depots; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?